

# ToughTimes

Vol. 1 No. 3 / Fall 2012

## POVERTY GROUP: Say 'NO!' to corporate cash

**P**eel Poverty Action Group (PPAG) wants Peel councillors to stop taking money from corporations to pay for their election campaigns.

As councillors prepared to discuss increases in development charges, PPAG Chair Edna Toth asked them to encourage developers to build homes that working people can afford.

"You know that more than 1,000 people a month use shelters in Peel Region, that the one soup kitchen in Peel that is open every day of the year, is busier than ever, and that 13,000 families may spend up to 15 years on the waiting list for homes they can afford," Toth said.

"Peel Poverty Action Group feels that guidance toward building affordable homes will be better provided if councillors no longer take money from corporations, many of whom are developers, to cover their election expenses."

Toth pointed out that corporate support is a longstanding practice in municipal elections, and it is not against the law.

"We are not suggesting that councillors' votes are influenced by campaign contributions," she said.

"However, corporate and trade union contributions to election campaigns are forbidden at federal level, and forbidden at provincial level in Nova Scotia, Manitoba and the Province of Quebec. At municipal level, Toronto banned corporate and union funding effective in the 2010 election." *Read more on page 3*



Divite Sarjoo begins a face makeover with the help of Petunia the Clown at Brampton-Mississauga and District Labour Council's first annual picnic. The event took place in Erindale Park, Mississauga, with everyone invited to free food and fun. Petunia had a busy afternoon with dozens of youngsters lining up for painting. She was almost as busy as the chefs, who dished out hamburgers and hotdogs to hungry visitors. More on back page. (Staff photo)

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# Inside out

*This is a letter from jail. The writer will be incarcerated for 15 months before the courts decide whether or not she is guilty.*

**L**ife here is the same as always. 7.10 a.m. to 7.15 a.m., breakfast arrives in the dark. 9 a.m. we get out of our cells to shower and clean our cells (every other day – odd numbered days, clean clothes on even days of the month) after that we sit in the ‘day room’ which is actually just a brick room with a TV and three metal tables with four seats attached so there’s seating for 12. We sit in this room until 11 a.m. when we get put in our cells for lunch (cells are 10 ft. x 16 ft) until 12.30 p.m. when we’re allowed out to ‘yard’ (a concrete area with brick walls that are really high and have chainlink across the top with razor wire, should we suddenly decide to scale the walls in an attempt to escape. We get 20 – 30 minutes of ‘yard’ per day, unless we’re on ‘lock down’ which means that we’re locked in our cells until further notice.

From 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. we are locked in the dayroom for more mindless TV, at 4 p.m. or shortly before we’re locked in our cells for supper until 6 p.m. then we’re locked back in the dayroom from 6 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. unless staff is short, then we’re in lockdown.

We have a nurse who comes to the unit with a cart and he/she then dispenses medication(s) to the inmates who have a doctor’s order. If you’re in pain, unless you have that doctor’s order, too bad! The nurse comes three times a day, every day.

At 8.15 p.m. – 8.30 p.m. we are locked in our cells until 9 a.m. the next day, when it begins all over again. We return to a place where there is no privacy, our most private moments (washroom) are done in front of someone, at some time, there’s no escaping it.

We get strip-searched once a month, unless they fear a breach of security, then we’ll get strip-searched again, this includes a team of men and women, about five or seven of them who tear our cells apart looking for contraband; we then get to clean it all up and dread the next search. It’s jail, some may say, but we’re still human beings, with value and most times humility which is not something you want others to see for fear it will be seen as a weakness. (I hear it’s worse on the men’s units). We have a maximum of 12-15 women and the men have 40-60 per unit.

Sometimes there are really big personality clashes, which can be hazardous to one’s physical health; not all women can live in harmony all the time as we all know, but there’s no place to go to get away from the issue at hand.

*Writing to someone in jail can be difficult. A copy of Tough Times, for instance, is not permitted and will be returned, along with any letter sent with it. A stamped addressed envelope is not permitted either, and once again, all contents are returned. Enclosed with the returned material is a printed form, with tick marks indicating why delivery has been denied. This note, from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, says: “It is your responsibility to make efforts to prevent this type of unacceptable material to be transmitted through correspondence...” But the regulations are not on the Ministry website. And each Corrections Centre has its own rules. - ET*

Illustration by Todd Foster

## ABOUT PEEL POVERTY ACTION GROUP

Peel Poverty Action Group is open to every individual and organization in Peel Region that cares about what poverty does to people.

It provides a safe place where people who are cash-poor and those who try to help them are encouraged to speak out.-- and The Tough Times is part of that safe place.

The Group’s mandate is to advocate for people in need and to educate the public about poverty issues.

Membership is free. Meetings take place at 9.15 a.m. the second Wednesday of every month, alternately in Mississauga or Brampton.

PPAG is registered under the Canada not-for-profit Corporations Act.

Contact [ppagactiongroup@gmail.com](mailto:ppagactiongroup@gmail.com) to be added to the email list.

## HOMELESS: THE VIDEO

*Spaces and Places: Uncovering Homelessness in the Region of Peel* is a 15-minute DVD in which homeless people describe their experiences.

A team from Peel Poverty Action Group including a once-homeless person, will show the video to a group on request. There is no charge.

Email [ppagactiongroup@gmail.com](mailto:ppagactiongroup@gmail.com) to book a showing. Allow about 45 minutes for the video and discussion.

The video was made by a team from York University, in cooperation with the Social Planning Council of Peel, financed by a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Download: <http://ppag.wordpress.com/spaces-and-places-video/>

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Address: 65 Spadina Rd. M5R 2T1  
Phone: 647-746-9510

**Dalia Emam**  
Public relations specialist  
Publications layout designer  
416-312-4046  
[douemam@yahoo.com](mailto:douemam@yahoo.com)  
<http://ca.linkedin.com/in/daliaemam>



# corporate cash

*Continued from page 1*

## Cash involved in the 2010 election in Peel:

Elected Caledon councillors received \$44,150 between them;

Mississauga councillors shared \$153,260 corporate and union money and the issue of campaign donations is being studied by the city's Governance Committee; Toth noted that Mayor Hazel McCallion does not take election donations from anybody, thus proving that councillors don't need corporate cash to run and win; Brampton councillors got \$358,845 between them.

Toth stated: "PPAG would like to save corporations the more than half-million dollars that they spend on election donations."

Regional Council and the three Peel municipalities should ask the Ontario Government to change the Municipal Elections Act so as to ban union/corporate donations to municipal election campaigns in Peel Region. Then the municipalities should approve enabling bylaws.

Such changes in the law would leave Peel's corporate donors with a half-million dollars of unused cash.

"In case that is a problem, local charities are hungry for money to pay for meals," Toth concluded.

*NOTE: Tough Times is produced by Peel Poverty Action Group (PPAG). Edna Toth is chair of PPAG and edits Tough Times.*

# SELF DESTRUCTION BUTTON

BY TODD FOSTER

In the seedy underworld of the self-destructive, one sees many painful, sometimes humorous, but often ridiculous chains of events. This instinct to avoid 'crashing-and-burning' is only informed by doing just that. To live another day, licking wounds wrought by misadventure (self-inflicted or not) is how we measure our experiences — meter our indulgences.

I'm telling the young women on the bus that I am his "special-needs worker". I'm not his "special-needs worker" but it's the best cover as I hold fast the wrists of this drunken man in his mid-fifties, as he grasps lecherously/lasciviously, drooling on himself. I'm his friend in the world and he is drinking himself to death.

Once I was walking him along, holding his size-



Writer-artist Todd Foster shown at work at Knights Table, Brampton, is a regular contributor to *Tough Times*. He sketches people and events in words and drawings, based on his experience of hard times. (Staff photo).

able frame by his arm and keeping him from stumbling into traffic. "People might think we're gay!" he slurred. I laughed, and still he clutched onto me because he could barely stand, let alone walk.

A grandfather for only two days, he says abruptly: "My kids hate me."

"It's pretty hard to really hate someone," I replied. "It takes a lot of energy. I mean, do you hate anybody?"

"Only myself!" he exclaimed.

In the seedy world of the self-destructive, one realizes many painful, regretful instances that never get better. They never seem humorous (to you), and always leave scars. As jaded as any, skepticism becomes religion among those who wantonly destroy themselves, and yet we fill the collection plate. We become what we hate.

The Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee is launching the first regional

## Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy

**The three-year Strategy will focus on the following issues**

- Income Security
- Food Security
- Economic Opportunities
- Affordable & Accessible Transportation
- Affordable & Accessible Housing

Over the course of the next three years, we will work to implement actions that address each of the issues and reduce poverty in Peel. We invite you to be a part of this important work.

at

The Poverty, Health & Homelessness Conference

October 23 & 24, 2012

at Sheridan College Brampton campus.

### Come and hear presentations from:

- Local residents experiencing poverty & homelessness
- Dr. Ritika Goel, Inner City Health Associates
- Matthew Mendelson, Mowat Institute
- Michael Shapcott, Wellesley Institute
- Deena Ladd, Workers Action Centre

For more information on the poverty reduction strategy and/or the conference please contact [poverty@peelregion.ca](mailto:poverty@peelregion.ca) or Adaoma at (905) 791-7800 x 4015.

# Words from the street

## WHOSE TREES THESE ARE I THINK I KNOW

STORY AND PHOTO BY I.Q. ROSE

It was a blindingly sunny, winter day with a brisk uncompassionate wind. I drove past two trees snugly wrapped in burlap to protect them from the elements and a phone call later discovered it's part of Mississauga's tree protection strategy.

The definition of tree hoarding begins with: 'trees require protection ... install hoarding to protect trees and rooting system from damage.'

This is the work of an arborist, which is a fancy name for someone who takes care of woody plants, especially trees. A tree protection bylaw in Mississauga dates back to 1976.

An arborist with the City of Mississauga Urban Forestry Unit told me they are trying to take care of our city's trees. Which raises tough questions affecting our homeless population:

If there is a tree protection strategy dedicated to the preservation and protection of the city's trees why isn't there a homeless protection strategy dedicat-



ed to the preservation and protection of the city's homeless? How does the city and the Region of Peel prioritize which essential service are to be delivered to whom/ what? When did preservation of trees trump preservation of life? Why isn't the Region adopting the best practices of the Urban Forestry Unit?

If they did, it would read something like this: the protection and development of the homeless population is one of our goals. Assisting people in the ini-

tial stages of homelessness may mean the difference between preserving dignity and self-worth and providing costly and often ineffective services later.

Please think of our homeless population the next time you see a city tree wrapped up in burlap like a babe in a manger.

*("Whose Trees These Are I Think I Know" is a spin off from Robert Frost's Stopping by The Woods on a Snowy Evening.)*

## WORDS ON HOUSING, FOOD, SAFETY AND MORE

### Trash or treasure

I live in a residential area of Brampton. I put my garbage and recycling out on the curb each Wednesday.

Every week an older man comes along our street with his bicycle and backpack, and checks for anything 'valuable'.

I guess he wants to salvage whatever he might be able to cash in, to get some extra pocket money, for food, personal items, whatever he needs.

### Immigration, inspiration

When I first arrived in Ontario I was overwhelmed with the number of societies available to newcomers to help them settle in.

Well done, Ontario. Inspirational.

### The challenge of housing discrimination

Last month a staff member at an agency obtained units at an apartment building for clients with developmental disability, but who are capable of living independently.

The units were secured with the

understanding that the Region of Peel would provide rent-geared-to-income funding, once the landlord agreed.

Clients were approved by the landlord, but when the landlord realized most of the funding would come from the Region, the offer of apartments was withdrawn, citing "problems with Region of Peel clientele".

*Comment: Peel Region has a responsibility to help people with a variety of challenges. Not every effort works out. The landlord apparently had once had a bad experience and is not ready to try again.*

### Job out, food bank in

I just lost my job and am embarrassed about having to turn to the food bank for help.

*Single mother of three*

### Affordable housing

A common complaint that I hear is that there isn't enough affordable housing in Peel. Working families struggle to pay rent and there is little left for other things, such as food and clothing.

### Work as the employer needs

I want to work and have several jobs but work is only limited and it's often on a needs basis for my employer.

### More needs, more money

In Malton where I reside, there is a need for funding to assist the homeless. There are many with mental health, addictions and in need of support.

Malton Housing Resource Centre is in need of more funding to increase their services as the needs in the community are increasing.

*Sharmila Dasilva*

### The walk

Many adults are out of work; seen walking the streets; unemployment insurance has run out and they are forced to go on Ontario Works. Many rent rooms which is sad. In this stage of their lives they should have something.

### Hanging out

We need better places to hang out. Too much drugs, crime, prostitution. I



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see it every day. I don't partake. I stay away.

### Saving the community

- Affordable housing
- More long-term shelter spaces
- More addiction services -- detox, in-patient treatment -- more people are overdosing
- Distribution of safer inhalation kits
- Many Peel people are being referred to Toronto for services (shelters, addictions, drink, health) which is unreasonable.

### A word to landlords

Landlords who rent rooms and basements need to get on board with providing affordable housing to residents in Malton.

These individuals who are renting cannot afford basic necessities and hiking the rent is not giving them the opportunity to get out of poverty.

Landlords, please be a part of the solution rather than being a part of the problem.



# New vibes for Ramadan

BY SHAILA KIBRIA-CARTER

**T**housands of Muslims in Brampton celebrated Ramadan this year, from July 20 to August 18 -- a month of fasting between sunrise and sunset.

The intention is to purify and cleanse the body, and to feel the plight of the poor, donating 2.5% of earnings to the needy. Our family usually gives to local food banks here in Brampton.

After sunset, it is a common sight to see Muslims in traditional gear heading towards the mosques (masjids) for prayers.

For the past three decades, Ramadan in Brampton has been a quiet affair within the Muslim community. Muslims would have breakfast at 3 a.m., before the sun rises, fast for the whole day, and then come home for a delicious dinner with their families.

This year seemed different. About a third of the way into the month, it felt as if the community was coming together to make Ramadan easier for Muslim families. Some of Brampton's all-night coffee shops had great specials, and



Shaila Kibria-Carter was the first executive director of Islamic Relief Canada, writes books for children about, for instance, the use of hijab, is the newly-appointed executive director of Labour Community Services of Peel. (Photos courtesy of Shaila Kibria-Carter).



Muslim youth could hang out with their friends and enjoy special foods late at night, and being on summer vacation, no worries about school.

After midnight prayers, young people could eat and talk until sunrise, when the fast began again. Some grocery stores had 'Ramadan sales', putting special food items at half price.

The best is meeting others at midnight at a 24-hour grocery store, know-

ing that there is a special bond, that they are fasting too. Brampton cashiers know about Ramadan, and neighbours are extra sensitive too, asking about Ramadan, asking about the celebration at the end of the month.

What's best is having my son's friends come over to celebrate with us even though they are not Muslim, they just want to learn about other religions, become aware of what their friend - my

son - is going through. I commend their parents for allowing this, it's the best way to fight racism and to learn about each other. I promised them all a gift at the end, just for being so accepting of my son's practices. I also ask them to invite my son over to their religious celebrations, whether it be Christmas or Diwali, etc. At the end of Ramadan, many families give gifts to their children.

During Ramadan, Muslim employees may take vacation so they can use less energy during the day when eating is prohibited, and then stay up between sunset and sunrise to eat and pray. Some Brampton employers urge Muslim workers to catch a 15-minute power nap during their break and some others have visited the mosques during Ramadan.

I feel that Bramptonians are connecting with Muslim citizens during Ramadan. I like this, especially since we as Muslims enjoy the festivities of other religions in Brampton, whether it be Christmas, Hannukah or Diwali.

## Got a disability? FAMILY SERVICES HELP OUT

BY KAREN POLLACK

**I**magine having a developmental disability and not being able to access supports in your community. What if, along with these challenges, you became homeless? It's happening to more and more people, and Family Services of Peel is trying to help.

As of 4 July, 2011 province-wide changes made by the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) were intended to simplify services and have a single-contact entry point for adults with developmental disability.

Before the change, adults with developmental disability got services without documents confirming a disability. With the changes, they must have a written statement of a developmental disability to get help from Developmental Services Ontario (DSO).

But few individuals who have a developmental disability can afford the psychological testing required for documentation. So some could not

access the necessary support services in the community, which increased their risk of becoming or remaining homeless.

To bridge the gap, Family Services of Peel has introduced the Homelessness Initiative Program (HIP). It helps people get the documentation they need and connects them to Developmental Services. HIP also recognizes that individuals with developmental disability often face discrimination and may have difficulty securing housing. So the program also offers advocacy.

HIP is a short-term service for adults with a developmental disability who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.

**For more information on the HIP program and eligibility criteria, or other programs offered by Family Services of Peel, phone Intake Services at (905) 453-5775**

*Karen Pollack is Homelessness Initiative Program Coordinator, Family Services of Peel.*

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# It was the best of times... *(from A Tale of Two*



Sheila Hill exhibits dolls typical of her homeland, the island of Dominica, at the Caribbean Pavilion during Carabram. *(Staff photo)*



Strike up the band! Chinguacousy Concert Band, with conductor Jamie Jarvie wielding baton, at the Lucas Holtom Carnival Day in Leander Park, close to North Bramalea United Church.

Lucas Holtom was only two years old when he was killed in a tornado in the year 2000. The Holtom family, with North Bramalea United Church, sponsor a free carnival every year in his memory. *(Staff photo)*

# It was the worst of times...

**U**nions in Peel Region have taken hits over the summer; one union even warns of loss of Canadian research potential.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and teachers unions say new legislation slashes workplace rights negotiated over the years.

More than 500 CUPE members were on strike against the Region of Peel during a 12-week period. Some got no increases, lost some benefits, an employee working 30 hours a week will rank as part-time so not entitled to benefits. Seniority is affected.

The Society of Professional Engineers and Associates (SPEA) represents engineers, scientists, technologists and tradespeople who work for Candu Energy Inc., now part of SNC-Lavalin Inc. Union members are back at work, but Staff representative Michelle Duncan says: "The strike resulted in some concessions being off the table. But it is not a great collective agreement. It remains to be seen if the employer will retain the expertise."

Peel labour demonstrated at Target HQ in Mississauga, over staff issues following Target's acquisition of some Zellers stores.



On the picket lines at Candu Energy, where the Society of Professional Engineers and Associates were on strike. They are back at work now, From left: Toomas Aasa, Mohammed Khan, Changming Xu, Constantin Romanescu.



New Tradition Music adds new sound to a labour demonstration at Target headquarters in Mississauga. In the band from left are Ruben Esquerra, Juan Esquerra, and Jorge Cantor. *(Staff photo)*



Cities, by Charles Dickens, 1859)



The art table at a Wildwood Park event. The folk having fun are Makayla Murray, Jaylem Barnett, Nicholai Barnett, Demille Francis, Naomi Francois, Crystal Wright, Denise Francis. (Staff photo)



Alaine Lopez with three-year-old twins Payton (left) and Makaylah at a rally trying to protect day care centres run by the Region of Peel. Dozens of complaints from parents won a two-years respite from immediate closings, but Regional councillors did not change their minds. Alaine is working towards an Early Childhood Education qualification at George Brown Collegiate. (Staff photo)

## DON'T GO HUNGRY

If you are struggling to make ends meet, have to choose between paying rent or buying food, can't afford formula for your baby, or have more bills than income ... The Mississauga Food Bank is here to help you.

Anyone in need and living in Mississauga is eligible to use a neighbourhood food bank or other food program regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race or immigration status.

Visit [www.themississaugafoodbank.org/getfood](http://www.themississaugafoodbank.org/getfood) or call us at 905-270-5589 or to find the food program closest to you.



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# Letters to the Editor

*Tough Times welcomes letters from readers. Writers may use a pen name if they wish. Tough Times needs to know who you are, so include a phone number and address, but your identity will not be revealed without your permission. Letters may be edited. Email your letters to [toughtimestabloid@gmail.com](mailto:toughtimestabloid@gmail.com) or deliver to Knights Table, Brampton.*

## Way to go, CMHA

Salvation Army Residential Services Executive Director David Carleton calls shelter residents "...the broken – spiritually, financially, and in their physical and mental health" in Jessica Henwood's article "When a house is not a home". In "Helter Shelter", the accompanying sidebar, while reflecting on his experience at a shelter, Todd Foster describes people with obvious mental health problems.

Not all mental health problems are obvious. Obvious or not, Canadian Mental Health Association/Peel Branch is here to help.

Community Support Workers from our Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team, Access to Recovery programs, Housing and Support Peel (HASP), Mental Health and Justice Services, Treat at Home, FACT Peel+ and Partnership Place, assist clients in finding and maintain housing. We also have staff on the Region of Peel Outreach Team helping people with mental health issues who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. As well, McEvenue Home Works, a minimally-funded program of last resort, helps people with serious mental illness to maintain their housing.

In addition to providing services (all of our programs are listed on our web site), CMHA/Peel is committed to breaking down barriers so that people can access the help they need. One barrier is stigma. Stigma and discrimination from society, as well as families, friends and employers, can make



Sherry Parsaud, Sharon Sobers, and Olivia Kinhead work at a men's shelter in Brampton. It is their job to help residents plan to get their own place to stay, and to ensure that they know how to get social assistance and other kinds of help. (Staff photo)

problems worse and can even prevent someone from seeking support.

Without support, it's hard to recover. Recovery is our core belief. It starts when someone takes the first step toward being a person separate from his or her illness.

One tool to battle stigma is mental health promotion. The tag line to CMHA/Peel's mission statement is: 'Promoting mental health, one mind at a time.' We do that in several ways.

Our Resource Centre has a library. In addition to pamphlets, hundreds of books and DVD's can be borrowed by members. There's a wealth of information on our web site [www.cmhapeel.ca](http://www.cmhapeel.ca) and 'Quick Guide', a booklet of frequently called numbers.

People can call 905-451-2123, e-mail [info@cmhapeel.ca](mailto:info@cmhapeel.ca) or drop-in at 2 County Court Blvd., Unit 102, Brampton, Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Our staff also goes out into the community to distribute information and refer to services, and our educators offer mental health presentations and training.

CMHA/Peel has been working to achieve a goal of 'mental health for all' since 1962 and is now celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We've come a long way, but there is still not enough support for many of our fellow citizens. We continue to do all we can with the resources we have and advocate for more.

*Sandy Milakovic, CEO, Canadian Mental Health Association/Peel Branch | 905-451-2123 | [info@cmhapeel.ca](mailto:info@cmhapeel.ca) | [www.cmhapeel.ca](http://www.cmhapeel.ca)*

## One year on the street



Randy slept here.

Today is my anniversary – one year on the street and it has been the best year of my life!

I got a new job starting today after I mop the floors at church, it's only a few hours a day for two weeks, helping the janitor where I live.

The janitor's wife asked me where I live, I smiled and he said "I know where he lives", I told her, "I live right here". She must have known already of course.

They were very pleased when I told them that I do about fifty hours a month of community service at two churches.

So much fun, I'm off to Linda's to mop the floors.

*Randy*

## A paper for all people

Far too often we are exposed to news outlets which give extended coverage to wealthy corporations and the government. But where is the people's voice?

*Tough Times* is one of the few news outlets for people of all communities, from all walks of life, can express their concerns and issues.

Just reading one article by Simon Black from York University titled "Why people on welfare are poor" I was blown away by the detail coverage. The article stressed the inherent design of welfare, its shortcomings and most important, the collective action the community needs to take.

This paper is the Peel Community's paper. This is its heart and soul. I can't wait to read more. Thank you.

*Sunny*

## Be nice to daycare centres

*Open letter to Peel Regional Councillors, filed with Tough Times for publication:*

I cannot believe given the current economic situation of many of our citizens you have decided to close daycare centres. You are hurting families and creating many situations for children to be at risk.

In total disgust.

*Diane Lee Huba  
Mississauga*

## Awesome article

Just seen the Summer 2012 *Tough Times* edition. I absolutely loved it!!

Our article for Bramalea Community Health Centre looks awesome!!

*Christa Hiscock RN  
Primary Care Nurse  
Bramalea Community Health Centre*

## ToughTimes

Tough Times is published quarterly.

**Next issue in December. Deadline for ads and editorial is November 1, 2012**

We encourage and welcome volunteer writers, reporters, artists, cartoonists, photographers, distributors and sales folk to join Tough Times.

Please send your letters to: [toughtimestabloid@gmail.com](mailto:toughtimestabloid@gmail.com)

**Produced by:**  
**Peel Poverty Action Group (PPAG)**

**Editor:**  
**Edna Toth**

**Layout Designer:**  
**Dalia Emam**

**Contributors:** (alphabetically by last name)  
**Simon Black, Leo Dias, Dalia Emam, Todd Foster, Randy Johnson, Fayaz Karim, Shaila Kibria-Carter, Christine Massey, Ian McGillivray, Karen Pollack, Michel Revelin, I.Q. Rose, Motilall Sarjoo, Edna Toth**

Printed by: Metroland Media Group Ltd.

## Advertising Rates

Tough Times has a minimum press run of 10,000 copies, distributed throughout Peel Region.

Target audience is people experiencing homelessness, using foodbanks and soup kitchens, people who are struggling, plus faith groups, social service agencies, trades unions, business people, and the general public.

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A full page is approximately 10 inches wide by 12 inches deep = 120 square inches.  
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# Food and medicine, all for free

STORY AND PHOTO BY IAN MCGILLIVRAY



Ian McGillivray and Michelle Fruendt of Brampton, Ontario, check out the Elecampane plant (*Inula helenium*) in the ravine behind Chris Gibson Recreation Centre, McLaughlin Road, Brampton.

McGillivray led a 'Wild Edible and Medicinal Plant Tour' recently, where Elecampane was one of many edible and medicinal plants found creekside.

Elecampane is a well-known medicinal herb that has been used to treat respiratory complaints including, coughs, pneumonia, asthma, pulmonary tuberculosis, bronchial/tracheal catarrh and bronchitis.

McGillivray notes: "As people struggle to make ends meet in a tough economy, it's only a matter of

time before they take note of the free bounty of food and medicine in their own backyards."

The book he is holding is entitled 'Edible and Medicinal Plants of Canada' by MacKinnon and Kershaw (Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon Libraries have it).

Another recommendation: The Boreal Herbal: Wild Food and Medicine Plants of the North, by Beverly Gray (in Mississauga Library).

McGillivray says: "Before consuming anything from the wild, ask a professional, and always consult a doctor before attempting to self-medicate."

[mcgillivray89@gmail.com](mailto:mcgillivray89@gmail.com)  
[www.facebook.com/lanaturemcgillivray](http://www.facebook.com/lanaturemcgillivray)

## Soup kitchen for Mississauga?

A member of Peel Poverty Action Group moved to Mississauga to be closer to a job. But the job didn't last – and he had nowhere to eat.

Without money for bus fare, he can't get to Knights Table in Brampton, which is Peel's only community kitchen that is open every day of the year.

There may be others like him in Mississauga – living in one room without cooking facilities or food storage. Or homeless – living in cars, hanging

out in underground parking lots, roughing it in parks, on river banks, alongside railway tracks.

Here's a partial list of where cash-poor folk can eat in Mississauga – but they can't eat every day.

### **Tuesday**

Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.;  
at The Compass, 310 Lakeshore Road West (905) 274-6564;

### **Wednesday**

Dinner 5:30 p.m.  
at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church,

24 Stavebank Road (905) 274-9309;

### **Wednesday**

Lunch and bible study at noon,  
at the Open Door, Square One  
(905) 276-9136, phone ahead  
(*Open Door will serve food any time if they have it, which is not very often*)

### **Thursday**

Breakfast 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
at The Compass, 310 Lakeshore Road West (905) 274-9309

### **Thursday**

Dinner 6:00 p.m.

at the Open Door, Square One,  
(905) 276-9136, phone ahead

### **Friday**

Doors open 5:30 p.m., dinner 7:00 p.m. at  
St. Mary Star, 11 Peter Street South, starting in November to April (905) 278-2058

### **Saturday**

Dinner 5:00 p.m. at the Freedom Centre, 157 Lakeshore Road West, starting in November 2012, to April (905) 891-1777

**If you've got places to add, please email [toughtimestabloid@gmail.com](mailto:toughtimestabloid@gmail.com)**



Gaspard Ndayishimiye works his garden at the Kiwanis Centre on McMurchy, in Brampton. From soil provided by the City of Brampton, he's grown thousands of tiny tomatoes and other goodies. More gardeners are working with plots at McMurchy and elsewhere. Phone 905 874-5577 for info.

## FOOD CUPBOARD



Heart Lake United Church in Brampton has opened an emergency food cupboard to serve needy people in the neighbourhood, as an extension of the church's Helping Hearts program.

Volunteers help in putting together packages of food. If you need a package or want to volunteer, phone 647 201-6434.

Sponsors are also needed to keep the operation going.

## CALEDON EATS IDEAS

Hungry?

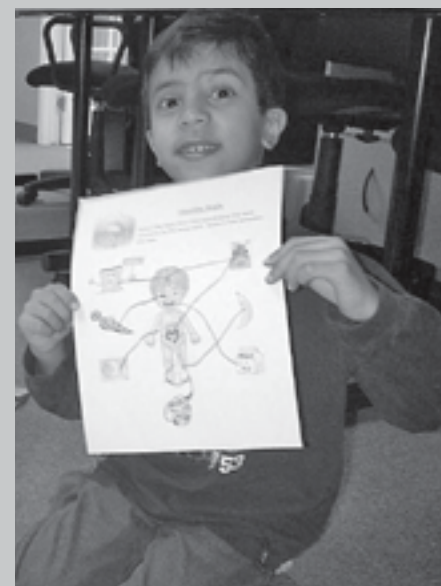
Caledon Community Services has two new ideas in operation:

Specially designed tags mark certain food products on the shelves of Bolton stores, letting residents know which items the Caledon Community Service's food support program needs the most.

A 'Food Support Emergency email list', where community members volunteer to donate food on request. When a specific food item is in short supply, an email goes to the list.

Also operating over the summer: workshops on growing tomatoes, extreme couponing and how to read food labels for nutritional value.

Next up: "Easy Lunches for Fussy Children".



Yahia shows off his picture of what food items best provide the nutrients to different parts of the body. He is attending classes offered by Caledon Community Services where children learn about nutritious food.



# What's being done about poverty?

**S**everal organizations have ideas about what can be done to make Ontarians better off. Here are some examples:

Brampton-Mississauga and District Labour Council is publicizing the researches of the Ontario Common Front, which says Ontario is in worse shape than the rest of Canada. There's more poverty, greater gaps between rich and poor, and governments are not putting money into vital public services.

Labour Council president Motilall Sarjoo speaking at a news conference at Knights Table, Brampton, urges everyone to talk to their MP, MPP, local councillor, to encourage them to make better choices in spending taxpayers' money.

"The Common Front says Ontario has the worst record of all the provinces in building affordable housing, in funding health care, education, the justice system, disability benefits," Sarjoo reported.

"Ontario's budget cutbacks are not helping. Funding for emergencies affecting social assistance recipients has been cut, child benefits curtailed, affordable housing budgets reduced, and job cuts planned in the public sector," he said.

The government has reduced personal and corporate income taxes, claiming to encourage investment in jobs in Ontario. But more jobs have not followed.

"Governments' choices on our behalf are not in our best interests," Sarjoo continued. Better social services are needed, paid for in part by raising corporate income taxes, extra taxes on people being paid more than \$300,000 a year, ending tax preferences for stock options and capital gains

## **Rights and Dignity at Work**

Good Jobs For All Coalition is campaigning for:



Labour Council president Motilall Sarjoo at a news conference at Knights Table, Brampton, urges everyone to talk to their MP, MPP, local councillor, to encourage them to make better choices in spending taxpayers' money. (Staff photo)

jobs that pay a living wage; provide sick leave; compensation and care for injuries on the job; job security; retirement benefits; pay for overtime; protection from being penalized if you speak up about problems in the workplace; the right to know in advance whether your employer is an agency, whether the worker is regarded as a contractor.

## **A campaign is in the making to:**

- Encourage workers to join unions
- Get support for Ontario Bill 77 – Fairness for Employees, and Bill 79– Equal Rights for Employees, introduced by MPP Taras Natyshak, NDP Essex.

- Make it easier for workers to join unions and maintain their union rights
- Strengthen government enforcement of workplace laws

## **Getting there:**

- Recruit and train community and union leaders to publicize the Rights and Dignity campaign geographically, by language, by culture;
- Bring together local groups to be ready for action in 2013.

To join training sessions email Andria Babbington, [ababbington@labourcouncil.ca](mailto:ababbington@labourcouncil.ca) or phone 416 418-0867

## **Seeking candidates**

Yet another group is seeking candidates to run in municipal, provincial, and federal elections.

Email [gbbhandal@clc-ctc.ca](mailto:gbbhandal@clc-ctc.ca)

## **Strategy**

Peel's Poverty Strategists list five issues:

- Safe and affordable housing
- Food security
- Affordable and accessible transportation
- Income security
- Economic opportunity

Details of Peel's Poverty Reduction Strategy will be announced at a Poverty, Health and Homelessness Conference at Sheridan College, Brampton, on October 23 and 24, 2012.

Peel Poverty Action Group (PPAG) will present two workshops: (1) involving people with lived experience of homelessness; (2) the politics of housing

Contact Tough Times at [toughtimestabloid@gmail.com](mailto:toughtimestabloid@gmail.com) or leave a note at Knights Table.

## LABOUR MOVEMENT PROTECTS CANADA

BY FAYAZ KARIM

**T**he labour movement in Canada predates the Great Depression of the 1930s. However, desperate social and economic conditions aided the growth of unions, spurred later by industrialization. Under pressure from labour, government conceded the right of workers to join unions and bargain collectively. Penalties for unfair labour practices and a labour relations board were introduced.

Labour was instrumental in motivating government to implement social programs that Canadians still cherish today: unemployment insurance, national healthcare, old-age pensions and child care benefits.

Great pain followed the rise of the unions, collective bargaining and the workers' right to strike. In a famous strikers' parade in Estevan, Saskatchewan in 1931, the police opened fire and killed three un-

armed strikers. Employers fiercely resisted collective bargaining and strikes. The federal government persistently interfered by stopping striking workers. In one case the military was sent into Quebec in July 1941. Historians argue that governments found it necessary "to conciliate business." Women's rights also paid a heavy price. Traditionally, women were paid only half of what a man was paid. They were attacked for taking jobs away from unemployed men. CCF's Agnes Macphail countered that the economic system was to blame for unemployment, not the women.

The Canadian labour movement arose to correct injustices created by large-scale industrialization. Labour instigated profound and positive change in Canada. Yet the goal of an ideal and just Canada is still elusive! The labour movement is as relevant today as before the Great Depression.

In 2012 the similarities to the Great Depression are striking.

National healthcare, old-age pensions, child care benefits, fair pay, reasonable benefits and reasonable working conditions are under threat. Government is intervening through legislation to undermine workers' right to strike. Women's rights continue to be battered, with the government removing a woman's right to sue for pay equity via the Charter, (except for the fortunate few who are union members and therefore covered by collective bargaining).

A new class of Canadians has come into being, the working poor. The government continues to conciliate big business. Resourceful corporations receive multi-billion dollar bailouts, while ordinary Canadians struggle to make ends meet. High unemployment, underemployment and poverty hinders the progress of Canadians.



# How the powerless can win

BY SIMON BLACK

A friend recently sent me a cartoon depicting two workers in conversation: One says to the other, “Remember when nurses, teachers, municipal workers and poor people crashed the economy and took billions in bonuses and bailouts?” “No”, his buddy responds; “Me neither” nods the first.

If we’ve learnt anything from the economic crisis and Great Recession it’s that big business and their friends in government are brilliantly adept at blaming the victim. And through their control of the corporate media and power to shape and influence public debate, elites have been successful at convincing many of our fellow citizens that public sector workers, unions, and people living on low-income are indeed to blame for the economic mess created by Wall Street and Bay Street, the big banks and high flying financiers.

With cuts to social programs and the assault on unions, ordinary people are being made to pay for a crisis that is not of their making. In the meantime, corporations continue to benefit from large tax cuts and sit on piles of cash. The rich escape tax increases and park their wealth in offshore accounts while public libraries close, teachers’ wages are frozen, and the poor struggle to put food on the table, avoid eviction, and cope with the daily grind of life on a low income.

Employers have used the crisis to restructure workplaces, increasing insecurity for the majority of working people. Keeping workers in fear of being replaced is one method by which bosses maintain a quiescent and compliant workforce. Creating precarious jobs—such as temp work that is difficult to unionize under our archaic labour laws—is another. The post-recession jobs recovery has seen pre-recession full-time work replaced with part-time, temporary, and other precarious forms of employment. Quiet workers make for big profits and happy employers.

Governments—federal, provincial, and municipal—have used the crisis and resulting budget deficits as an excuse to roll back the hard fought gains of the labour movement. Both Harper and McGuinty have passed or threatened to pass back-to-work legislation to stop workers from exercising their rights to bargain collectively or to go on strike to defend their wages and working conditions. Weakened unions hamper the labour movement’s traditional role as a counterweight to the influence of big business on government.

Workers on welfare or disability have also been under attack. The Ontario government’s poverty reduction plan has been put on hold. While McGuinty has raised welfare rates slightly, these increases have not even kept up with inflation. If welfare was to be returned to pre-Harris Conservatives levels, the government would have to raise rates by close to 60 per cent. In addition, anti-poverty measures such as the Ontario Child Benefit have been cut.

So the next few years, and likely the next decade, look tough for all working class Ontarians, but especially for those already living near or below the poverty line; those who were vulnerable prior to the Great Recession are made even more vulnerable since. Low-income Ontarians are confronting fewer child-care subsidies, extended waiting lists for social housing, and persistent unemployment and underemployment. More people than ever are caught in the dire dilemma of whether to feed the kids or pay the rent. Changes to employment standards and labour law, which could create the conditions to lift people out of poverty, are derided as “unfriendly to business”.

How then do we make gains in a climate of austerity? Confronted with the resources of the rich and powerful, how do we mobilize power from below to defend our past victories and fight for social justice?

We should look to history for guidance. In the 1930s and 40s, Canadian workers went on strike for union recognition and better wages and working conditions.

In 1943 alone, one in three workers engaged in strike action. Unemployed workers set out to march on Ottawa to demand they be treated with dignity and respect. Those struggles led to the legitimization of unions, the construction of the welfare state, and a greater share of society’s wealth going to ordinary folks.

In the 1960s, unions and anti-poverty organizations pushed for the expansion of social programs and lessened inequality. They marched, they protested, they made noise.

In the mid-1980s, anti-poverty, labour and women’s groups mobilized to influence the direction of the provincial Liberal-NDP coalition government. Poor people’s marches snaked through three of Ontario’s largest cities. The end result was a 25 per cent increase in welfare rates and the humanization of many aspects of a stigmatizing and punitive system.

History shows us that our silence will be met with government inaction. As American academics Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward put it in their classic book *Regulating the Poor*, “A placid poor get nothing, but a turbulent poor sometimes get something.”

We may not control great riches or other sources of power like the police and the military, but we do have the power to refuse to go along with agendas of the elites. Society’s ability to function requires that students go to classes, tenants pay their rent, workers do their jobs, and the poor remain quiet and polite. If we decide not to cooperate, not to go to classes, to withhold our rent, to occupy welfare offices, or withhold our labour, we can exercise power from below. But we can’t do these things without organization. That’s why it’s more important than ever to join organizations like Peel Poverty Action Group and collectively defend our past victories and work toward building a better, more just world.

**“A placid poor get nothing, but a turbulent poor sometimes get something.”**

*From American academics Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward in their classic book Regulating the Poor*



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# Labour Council picnic

Union members turned out in force to Brampton-Mississauga and District Labour Council's first annual picnic in Erindale Park. Habitat for Humanity was there, seeking volunteers for its house-building activities, while Toronto Labour Council wanted better jobs for all; Linda Beaudoin represented I Care, Berkha Gupta was there for HIV/AIDS, Derek McCloskey handed out Labour Council's own leaflets, and Peel Poverty Action Group distributed *Tough Times* while Labour Council chefs cooked hamburgers and hotdogs. Seva Food Bank (right) was there too. (Staff photos)



Samar Busuri with balloons and painted face at Peel's first Labour Council picnic.



Berkha Gupta of Peel's HIV/AIDS network (PHAN) at the Labour Council picnic.



Andrea Babbington of Toronto and York Region Labour Council is holding the wheel demanding good jobs for all.



**Anju Sikka**  
Sales Representative

**Century 21**  
CENTURY 21 New Star Realty Inc.  
2572 Lawrence Avenue E  
Toronto, ON M1P 2R7

[anju.sikka@century21.ca](mailto:anju.sikka@century21.ca)  
[www.Century21.ca/anju.sikka](http://www.Century21.ca/anju.sikka)

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Warm regards,  
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direct: 416-520-3699

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